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Traveling notes in Central America

Washington

1912

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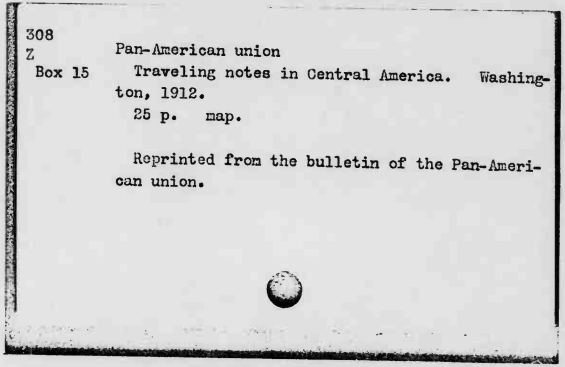
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President Butler
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Traveling Notes
IN
Central America

REPRINTED FROM
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1912

15 Sept. 1915 MG

TRAVELING NOTES IN CENTRAL AMERICA

To the Editor:

DEAR SIR: Your valuable publication, the MONTHLY BULLETIN, I have read since the very first number, and I wish to take this opportunity to compliment you and the staff in the Bureau for the worthy manner in which it is issued. You are to be especially complimented on the marked improvement that has been so characteristic of the volumes of the last two years. Remarks of genuine admiration for the BULLETIN are constantly expressed by both travelers and natives throughout Central America.

From careful and sincere but friendly critics I have heard, however, an occasional comment to the effect that, while the picturesque and attractive side of Latin America was at last receiving the attention it deserved, the practical side was seldom given the emphasis it merited. The stranger is indeed glad to know that the city of Guatemala can now be reached by an all-rail route from the Atlantic seaboard, but the traveler, and especially the commercial traveler, wants or even demands more than that. He desires details, the simple minutiæ of daily experiences, which will be a valuable guide in his own future plans for invading a new territory. Hitherto this traveler has in vain turned the pages of the BULLETIN.

Now, I am not a literary man. Nevertheless I have had abundant practical experiences north of the Isthmus of Panama, and I am going to try to arrange them in readable form. I shall just tell what I know to be facts, capable as such of aiding those who come after, and of saving them from pitfalls into which simple ignorance might lead them. Perhaps you will never print my remarks, but I shall not grieve much, for the chief cure of a *cacœthes scribendi* is to put the words and ideas on paper; after that it is a matter of secondary importance whether they ever reach the eyes of the reading public.

"I think I'll do Central America," a mighty bright and pushing commercial traveling man said to me a few months ago. "I can give three months to it, and my house would like to see me clean up a new territory, anyhow." As my advice was not asked in the matter, it was not given, but this remark set me thinking. How many travelers, commercial or otherwise, know how to do Central America so as to get a clear insight into the various and distinct conditions in all five Republics? Very few, according to my experience. The German, the Frenchman, the Englishman, and even the Spaniard, can cover the territory from the Rio Grande to the Isthmus, but the Yankee salesman is seldom seen. The tourist, even, has only recently begun to show an intelligent appreciation of the beauties of Costa Rica, or of the delicious climate of Guatemala. Since the opening of the railways from the Atlantic side, these two countries have more and more attracted the pleasure seeker and the student, but Nicaragua, Salvador, and Honduras are entities as indistinct in the thought or imagination of the ordinary traveler, as are Turkey, Morocco, and Afganistan. I confess an ignorance about these three old-world countries, but I do know a great deal about all five Republics of Central America. Years of downright experience in covering them with a practical purpose has taught me lessons of real value about them, and if the BULLETIN is kind to me it will help spread this experience all over the Americas.

Ten years ago I crossed the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea for the first time. I traveled in a nasty little Norwegian banana tramp, which had two pens called state-rooms, with three beds apiece, but as soon as the steamer entered the Tropics the only decent place to sleep was the deck. Panama was then abandoned by the French, ignored by the Colombians, and abused generally by the whole world. Business was at a standstill. The wharves were rotting, although boats tied up to them because there was some traffic across the Isthmus for the west coasts of Central and South America. Colon and Panama were fever beds; the only habitable hotels were the Central in Panama and the Washington in Colon, the two cities being otherwise dirty, picturesque, and foreign. Even five years ago, when the activities of the present régime had been well begun, transportation facilities were somewhat subject to criticism. Business was better, but there was a good deal of gamble about it. Prosperity on the Isthmus might last, but quick sales for cash was the rule, and no great study was given to the future.

To-day a miracle has been accomplished before our eyes. Everybody knows what hygienic changes have taken place, but not everybody is aware of the real national spirit and ambition in the Republic of Panama itself. The country is actually growing, and its consuming power outside the zone is noticeably progressive. I wish I had time to discuss this point; if the BULLETIN ever asks me, I can tell a thing or two about business in Panama, although it is now almost altogether in the hands of the foreigner. Americans don't count for much, and it is their own fault, too. What I want to do, however, is to give a picture of traveling conditions, so as to pave the way for better trade.

I have just been to Panama. I left New Orleans in as comfortable a steamer as ever stirred salt water. The appointments were as first class as any traveler could wish. These boats run on a regular schedule of five days between New Orleans and Colon. There are others, equally comfortable and regular, of several lines, between New York and Colon, so that the trip, as far as concerns convenience in traveling, is even pleasanter than crossing the Atlantic. When I landed at Colon, too, I found great changes from ten years ago. To be sure there is no decent hotel in Colon, but the streets are paved, the danger of fever is at an end, and a civilized railway station with all modern improvements makes the traveler feel as if he were in the States.

But he isn't. Even in Panama he is in Latin (Spanish) America, and he makes a huge mistake if he doesn't recognize it. I am not speaking of the tourist, who is seeking for the strange and unusual, but of the man of business who goes for a purpose, and can return home only when that purpose is accomplished. I am speaking to that man who said he would "do" Central America in three months.

I took the train leaving Colon at 5 o'clock in the morning, partly because it would bring me to Panama in time for a good breakfast at the Tivoli Hotel, partly also because most trains in Central America leave one side or the other at sunrise, and it is well to begin to get used to it as soon as possible. The man who can not get up at 4, drink his coffee and catch his train at 5, had better stay away from the Tropics. Sometimes he will not be so lucky as to have a train to catch, for many a trip over the mountains must be made on mule or horseback; in that case the traveler has no choice; he must start before sunrise, or he arrives nowhere and accomplishes nothing. The Panama Railroad charges 5 cents gold a mile, with no reductions. As the distance from Colon to Panama is 48 miles, the cost can be easily reckoned.

The Tivoli Hotel in Panama is first class in every particular. It is managed by the Isthmian Canal Commission on the straight American plan. Three square meals a day, beginning with a substantial breakfast, including buckwheat cakes—if the traveler can not get out of that habit—are furnished, and there are rooms with private baths, if this luxury is requested. The Tivoli is a revelation to those who knew Panama years ago, when it was altogether a Spanish-American town. Then the Central, even yet frequented by those who have to sojourn in the city, either for business or because of the interval between steamers, was the rendezvous for the traveling world. Every language was heard there, every nationality was seen. The Central is still a popular resort, but Yankees frequent it less and less, nowadays.

This word "Yankees" I use advisedly. We from the "States" are all Yankees (*Yanquis* or *Yankes*) in Spanish America. It is no term of reproach, but an appellation thrust upon us to distinguish the inhabitants of the United States from those of other Republics of America. I, as a Yankee, went to the Tivoli. It lies within the canal suburb of Ancon, but the legal rate of 10 cents gold—20 cents silver—for a single trip in a public conveyance carries the traveler to its door from any part of the city.

It does seem to me as if I never would get started on my story, but I must stop here to interpret for the stranger the significance of the money in Panama. The Republic has a silver coinage of fractions of a (gold) balboa or dollar. Its value is guaranteed by the Governments of both Panama and the United States, so that the half-balboa, the highest value coined, represents exactly the value of 50 cents in American money. The natives, however, could not resist the temptation to call this 50-cent piece a *peso*. A *peso* in all countries having such a denomination is commonly, but incorrectly, called, in English, a dollar. A *peso*, moreover, is supposed to have 100 cents, be they called *centavos*, *céntimos*, or *centésimos*. Therefore this misnamed Panamanian *peso* is without reason divided into 100 imaginary cents, 2 of which must go to make up the value of the 1 cent gold. Thus a condition has arisen in the Republic, as well as in the zone, which has its foundation in tradition only, but which is so deeply rooted that even the I. C. C. (Isthmian Canal Commission) recognizes it by dividing its employees now, since the gold standard was introduced, just as before that date, into gold and silver employees. The result is that all legal prices are quoted in terms of the American (gold) dollar; railway tickets, Tivoli Hotel rates, and postage stamps are included. All commercial prices are quoted in terms of the fictitious and traditional local dollar, or *peso*. The legal rate for a carriage is 10 cents; the price stated by the *cochero* (driver) is always 20 cents, and he may sometimes add the word *plata* (silver), for the understanding of the stranger. A shirt costs, say, 3 *pesos*, and frequently the shopkeeper will say three dollars; this means $1.50 gold. It is a very artificial adjustment of prices, but as long as the native and day laborer are stimulated by the belief that they are thereby paid in greater abundance for their activity, the confusion in money values will prevail. The traveler should bear this lesson in mind, or he will often miscalculate his expenses disastrously.

Well, then, I am at the Tivoli Hotel, and have started out to make my professional calls as a sales agent for the manufacturing houses I represent. How to accomplish results, how to avoid the failures of bad packing and insecure credits, which so frequently interfere with American success in commercial competition, are subjects I shall discuss at the conclusion of these articles, if the BULLETIN allows me to continue. Just now I am explaining how to travel; nothing more. At the Tivoli I take my last glimpse of the kind of hotel I am used to back home. I have met many good friends among the merchants, have sold my usual order, and, with certain well-founded mental reservations, I plan to begin my trip to the Republics of Central America. It has taken me a week to cover Panama, and this, let me add, is a short period for a city of that size. I had hoped to catch a steamer from Colon, only 48 miles across the Isthmus, on the following day, the 26th of the month. Two weeks of my allotted three months have already passed, and I have scarcely begun. If I can make Limon, Costa Rica, by that steamer, I shall gain several days and perhaps keep even with my schedule.

Just as I was preparing to move across to Colon, one of those tremendous tropical rains came on. I could not stop it; I could only watch it fall. The rivers rose as if by magic, and before I could get started one bridge was washed away and a land-

slide occurred on the track. Traffic was interrupted for a considerable time, and even passengers were delayed for several days. The result was that I lost my steamer, and had to wait in Colon from Tuesday till Friday before I could take another.

It is only 190 miles from Colon to Limon, and all steamers leave in the afternoon of one day to arrive early in the morning of the following day. I was fortunate enough to be admitted at "The Lodge," in Limon, the comfortable hotel managed by the United Fruit Company for its employees and certain members of the traveling public. Limon of to-day is unrecognizable by those who knew the sloppy town of ten years ago. Its streets are well paved and clean; its park is a vision of loveliness, and there is a bustling activity about the place that removes it entirely from the category of tropical seaports, where travelers land and escape as soon as possible into the interior. I had business in Limon which took the better part of three days, but meanwhile the rains had done damage along the line; *derrumbes* (landslides) had occurred, so that it was five days before I, with my baggage, could reach San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica, 105 miles inland and nearly 4,000 feet above sea level. Three weeks gone, with the harder travel still to come.

Please do not think I am drawing an unfavorable or exaggerated picture of my misadventures. I have not always been delayed by rains in Panama or Costa Rica. Many times it is possible to go through without a break, but these accidents are very apt to happen, especially on the eastern slope of the mountains of those Republics bordering the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea. If the traveler is not prepared for them, if he thinks he must leave on a definite date and arrive exactly as per schedule, and frets his patience away over little mishaps like this, he will not make a success in Central America, and somebody else should be sent in his place.

San Jose is a little paradise. It lies near the surrounding hills, and so close to the border line between the east and the west slopes that it has the benefit of the heavy rains of the one, with much of the climatic advantages of the other. It is a busy place, too, well worth the careful attention of the manufacturer, the distributing agent, and the investor from the United States. The hotels are poor, rather high priced, and almost always so crowded that it is hard to get a room. The climate is bracing, even cold in the early months of the year, and during our summer it rains very frequently. The traveler must prepare himself therefore not for a hot, steamy tropical place like Colon or Limon, but for weather that resembles April, say, in Washington.

The first step everyone takes on entering a country is to spend money. In Costa Rica, for instance, the traveler must pay a wharf tax of about $1 gold before he is permitted to touch land or to bring his baggage with him, apart from whatever customs duties may be levied on his goods. Costa Rica is on a gold basis, the gold money of the United States being a legal tender for certain payments. The standard coin is a silver *colon*, with fractional currency and paper notes of higher value. This *colon* has an exchange value of 46½ cents gold. The slight fluctuations to which it is subject need not be considered, and for all practical purposes an American gold dollar is equivalent to ¢2.15, the ¢ standing for *colon*.

Up to the city of San Jose, even through Colon, Panama, and Limon, I have been on familiar ground. English is spoken generally, the daily life is not very far out of the ordinary, and even the man unacquainted with Spanish has no difficulty in getting along and in selling his goods, if he finds a market. Beyond San Jose, however, conditions are different. A foreign language is less a part of the education of the business man; the successful commercial traveler must possess some familiarity with Spanish or he suffers in contrast with his friendly competitors, the Germans and English, and if he can not explain in Spanish the technical features of his wares, he will make small impressions on his hoped-for customers, and, moreover, he neglects thereby an opportunity to pay a delicate compliment to them, for they appreciate sincerely any effort made by the foreigner to converse with them in their own tongue.

I myself speak a rather indifferent Spanish. At the theater, for instance, I seldom understand the play or its wit; in society I frequently make ridiculous blunders, yet I always persist in talking business in Spanish; I learn the polite phrases that are so pretty and so full of meaning in pure Castilian, and I will bet a good sum that this little effort of mine is accountable for half my success, for it puts me on a friendly footing with both sexes in all classes of society, and shows that I have some human regard for my commercial associates.

There are three other factors in traveling in Central America which must be constantly borne in mind. I have learned the lesson myself, and I wish that others would accept my experience as of seasoned value. The first is the character of the *hotels*. I know them from Panama to Quezaltenango. I can get a good meal in every hotel in Central America. The man who says he can't, either pretends to live in a Fifth avenue style, or does not know how to conform to the customs of the country. There is no such thing as a European plan, for all hotel accommodations include the room and the meals, usually at a moderate price. These meals are the morning coffee, with bread and butter and, if desired, hot milk in place of hot water; often fruit may be had for the asking, but eggs, though they are obtainable, cost extra. What is called *almuerzo* comes at noon and differs from the *comida* in the evening only by the addition of a salad, some *dulce* (sweets) and perhaps cheese; both meals are bountiful—in fact, the tendency in Central America is to eat too much—well cooked and well served. If the ordinary hotel in cities in the United States of 20,000 or less, cooked and served meals even half as appetizing as those in hotels in little Central American towns of 2,500, there would be less dyspepsia among the commercial travelers of the land. I state this with a positive conviction based on long trial, and defy the fair-minded man to controvert it. Of the rooms I can not speak with enthusiasm. The beds are not always clean, and it frequently happens that each room contains more beds than one so that it must be shared with others; frequently these rooms have no windows, the only source of natural light being the doorway that opens from an inner court or directly onto the street. The toilet facilities are usually primitive, one tiny washbowl and a scant towel sufficing; the *excusados* are almost always dirty, and the sooner this is accepted with only a mental protest, the better; and that tropical pest, the flea, is universal.

The second factor is the cultivation of patience. Let me drop the old joke of *mañana;* there is as much sanity in life in putting off many things till to-morrow, as there is in doing to-day in a hurry what can better be done the day after. But no one frets in Central America. Usually there is only one train a day between points, but the man is foolish who loses his temper because he misses that one train and must therefore wait twenty-four hours for the next. I never think of catching a train until I am absolutely certain that nothing whatever can possibly detain me. Many a time, when I had hoped to be able to get away, I have lost a day for five minutes additional conversation, but I never lose my temper on that account. Many a time I have waited in a hot little seaport with nothing to do while the expected steamer violated her schedule to take on freight at the port below. Many a time I have told a merchant who put me off till the next morning that I was pleased to meet his convenience in the matter, although I might be losing a whole week between steamer dates. But this sort of patience pays. American hustle in selling goods quickly should not be the keynote in Central America; and I dislike to admit that American merchants often fail sadly in keeping their promises of promptness to deliver goods on time after the sale is made. Always keep your temper and your promises, is excellent advice.

The third factor is a kindly attitude toward the people themselves of all degrees. Do not listen to the ill-humored gossip that the Central Americans hate us. It is not true. They may hate the individual who misconducts himself; they may hate the corporation who gets the best of them; but it is nonsense to assume at the outset that any individual must run counter to a racial antipathy. The man who has good goods to sell and offers them at a fair price will do business, but the man who carries a chip on his shoulder works under a fatal handicap. Do not be misled on this point. Go into

Central America with an open mind and a human spirit of friendship. That's all there is to it. Make your own impressions, do not take them from others, and be fair to yourself and to them. I would rather travel alone and unarmed (as I have done) for three days in any part of Central America, than for three hours after dark east of Broadway.

(In my next letter I am going to take you through the real Central America of practical daily life.)

GUATEMALA CITY, *October 1, 1910.*

To the Editor:

DEAR SIR: The MONTHLY BULLETIN for September lies before me, and I feel highly flattered to see, on page 434, the heading of my first article—the title is repeated above—on my experiences in Central America. I am thereby encouraged to continue these notes, begging that you use your editorial blue pencil if anything I may say appears unsuitable to the character of your magazine. For good measure, let me add that this September number has lots of readable matter in it, and I shall pass it on among my friends to help the cause along.

I left myself in San Jose de Costa Rica, having spent three weeks on the way there, through Colon and Panama. A commercial traveler must devote at least one week to San Jose. It may not take that long, but it would be unwise to estimate less than that. Moreover, there are several towns within easy reach of the capital, some of which should be visited personally, the selection depending upon the line of goods a man carries. Cartago, Heredia, and Alajuela are the larger places, all on the railway. Cartago is the aristocratic neighbor, Heredia the cattle market of the metropolis. The people buy a great variety of stuff, and they want serviceable articles. For instance, stationery, men's furnishings, dress material, shoes, house supplies, hardware; these are all staples. Groceries, canned foods, clothing, just such stocks as the prosperous but conservative farming community in Indiana might require, can be marketed in Costa Rica, if a man goes after it in the right way.

But four weeks are already spent, and I have not really entered, as yet, the experiences that distinguish travel in Central America from that in more accessible parts of the world. This begins when one goes down from San Jose to the west coast and continues the trip along the Pacific.

Now, here is where I can give advice which will allow my traveling friend, who attempts it for the first time, to escape inconveniences and annoyances that cost me many an unpleasant lesson before I learned how. I refer to the kind of clothing and traveling equipment with which to provide himself.

The first regard should be for the clothing. As far as undergarments are concerned, one may wear anything that is comfortable, from the very lightest and thinnest gauze or cotton to light-weight soft and ventilated wool. I myself prefer cotton. The ultra-scientific advice about absorption by animal over vegetable fiber, etc., is inconclusive, in the American Tropics, at least. I have sweated in misery clothed in Jaegers, and have never caught a cold, though wearing only the flimsiest of summer shirts. I have, however, always protected myself, if the nights are cool (as in the mountains), or in those muggy, sticky, but nevertheless chilly, nights that sometimes follow rainy days on the coast, by a snug flannel abdominal band put on or taken off, as the weather may require. A light negligee shirt with attached collar and cuffs, unstarched, is the best for steamer, train, or saddle. Be comfortable is the healthiest rule.

For outer garments, linen or cotton ducks, trousers and coat, are fashionable in coast towns, but they are easily soiled, and, as the traveler must have at least six suits in order to appear neat and fresh at all times, I do not consider them practical. They take up too much room and cost too much in washing bills. Simple blue serge, or any such light clothing, is the best for continuous wear. Some persons advise *khaki a la militaire*, but I do not like it, myself. It never looks quite clean and always is conspicuous. Even in riding across the mountains, it seems to me unsuitable for the commercial traveler, as savoring of the official.

For clothing off the railway, that is, in the saddle, I still prefer a simple woolen suit, made and used only for that purpose and changed as soon as a business place is reached. Right here is where experience counts for something. No man should attempt, as I unfortunately have done in my earlier trips, to go into the interior of the country without a proper and complete saddle outfit. This must include the traveling suit mentioned, broad-brimmed soft hat, heavy socks, and thick, high-laced riding boots, with close-fitting puttees. These last are essential.

Do you know what *garapatas* are, not to mention mosquitoes, sand flies, and such infernal pests of the Tropics? *Garapatas* are little jiggers or ticks, of insignificant size but unconquerable penetration; they have a malignant affinity for one's ankles; they flourish all over the Tropics, and once having tasted human flesh, they will die, happy in the misery they have caused. I have known one poor fellow in bed a week with swollen ankles; I myself have had my *mozos* (native men servants) scratch my legs for twenty minutes at a time—they are experts, too—trying to relieve me of the wicked creatures, and yet my ankles would be raw for weeks thereafter. All this, because I did not provide myself on a mountain trip with high-laced shoes and puttees.

Then the complete outfit should include one's personal saddle, spurs, and a flexible waterproof bag, which can be rolled tightly and strapped behind the saddle, but which is very useful for holding the necessary change of clothes, toilet, and other articles that can not be carried in the pocket. These impediments may seem cumbersome, and at the beginning they cost extra money, but in the long run they are an economy, and with the comfort they bring are well worth the slight trouble they cause. I nearly forgot one important item—a rubber coat. This should be long and thin. I do not mean a mackintosh or a cravenette. Simply a rubber coat, black and cheap. There are only two garments capable of keeping off a tropic rain—a slicker, and a black rubber coat; the slicker is too heavy and unwieldy; the simple black rubber coat will serve all purposes of protection against wind, rain, or dust, it can be used in the evening for warmth or as a cover for evening dress, it costs little and can be thrown away for a new one without regret.

So much for the preparation to meet travel of all sorts. Of course, if one does not plan to leave the easy path of the railway, much of the baggage above will be unnecessary, but I am talking to the commercial traveler who wants to sell his goods, and he must be ready to go after the market. Many parts of Central America are to-day as easy of access as southern Indiana, and every year sees some advance into new fields, but it will be a long time yet before the whole field can be covered without the use of the saddle and the faithful mule.

But here I have been taking all my space and time giving advice! It's sensible, however, just before leaving San Jose, in Costa Rica.

A pleasant little railway runs west from San Jose toward the Pacific.* It has been a long time building, and is not even yet opened the entire distance to the coast, although only a few miles are incompleted. When I was last over it, the gap between the construction camps was about 16 miles (24 kilometers). On the western slope of the mountains of Costa Rica the climate is more agreeable, the air drier and more stimulating, and the sun seems brighter. There is less rain during the year, and in the dry season there is really no rain at all, so that if one travels after the middle of December, say, and before the end of March, the luxury of highland weather is felt in all perfection.

The train leaves the city a few moments after 8 in the morning—rather late for a tropic schedule—but there is no need of hurry to escape the glare and heat of midday. The climate is perfect, and the clear, mellow air makes me wish that the day would

*This railway, 67 miles (108 kilometers) is now open to Puntarenas. The train leaves San Jose about 8 a. m., to arrive at Puntarenas about 2 p. m.

never end. This is often one of the great rewards for absence from home and the so-called comforts of modern life, the absolute perfection of air, sun, sky, and scenery, in the Tropics. Indolence is not the word to describe the feeling; I do not get lazy, for the instant a demand comes for action I am ready for it. But the delicious feeling creeps into my bones that time has stopped, and that physical contentment is the nirvana of eternity. I know of few places in the United States where the climate is so overwhelming as it is in many places in the midmountain Tropics of Central America and Mexico. Perhaps in Tennessee or the higher levels of Arkansas, for the short weeks of spring, I have experienced this intoxication of climate, but California, Florida, or Illinois don't know the force of the word! There the result is due to a change of season, and one feels that one must grasp it before it escapes; in Central America, even in the rainy season, the hours of sunshine seem to be perpetual. Just to live is sufficient reason for living.

Does it sound ridiculous for a traveling salesman to give way like this to an acknowledgment of a stratum of primitive poetry in his make-up? Sometimes I am myself ashamed of it, but then, again, when I meet my shrewd clear-headed Latin friends and see how gladly they appreciate the poetic phases of their routine, or when I chance upon hard-headed Yankees or Englishmen who have yielded to these local influences and even go me one better by reading poetry, I realize that we all have the spark of it in us, no matter how dulled it may have become in the anxieties of life between New York and Chicago. In fact, those of us who are successful in Latin America must be partly poets. We must be bitten by the bug of the Tropics. The man who doesn't dare confess the enjoyment in this side of himself had better keep away from the whole region. He has no business there, and that's all there is to it.

But the train has finally arrived at Orotina, a little station at the end of the railway, when I was last over the line, although I hear that it has now advanced beyond that point, bringing the track from San Jose closer yet to the station of Esparta, which is connected by rail with the port of Puntarenas, on the Pacific Ocean. Before reaching Orotina we passed the stations for several prosperous mining camps. They maintain their own commissaries, but there are general stores in the neighborhood, and these must sell to the employees, both native and foreign, and to the farming folk in the district. Besides, the mines themselves need machinery, tools, and other equipment, and they are erecting electric power stations in the near-by streams. It is worth a visit to them, to see the first-class improvements going on in out-of-the-way places in Central America, and a man with merchandise of a proper kind might sell his expenses and establish a future trade. I do not stop there, however, as I want to get on to the coast.

At Orotina I had ample time for the breakfast (*almuerzo*) before starting on the ride across the mountains to Esparta. The best plan, as I have found out, is to telegraph ahead to the livery stable (*establo*), and the same may be said of any similar trip to be made, to have horses and a cart ready for the arrival of the train. The cart is necessary because for this short journey it is better than mules for carrying baggage. Further on, in Honduras and Salvador, the faithful mule does the work, as I shall tell when I get there.

This is a good place to explain the most serviceable way to arrange the baggage for convenient and economical travel. It cost me lots of trouble to learn the lesson, and I hope others may profit by my experiences. Nowadays I always go with two, four, or six (an even number) of light, strong, and water-tight trunks, well locked and strapped—a canvas cover might be of advantage, though I never tried it—each trunk weighing no more than 100 pounds, packed. All trunks must weigh the same. The reason is this: A mule is loaded by slinging his load across a pack saddle and strapping it with numerous ropes passed snuggly under the belly of the animal. The *mozos* (servants) are very clever in adjusting the cargoes with the ropes, but are often obliged to ask help if the boxes are too heavy. I call 250 pounds a full load (125 pounds on a side), but I have thought that 300 pounds on a poor little mule, climbing patiently rocky and stiff mountain trails, was too much. Better less baggage or more mules, is the civilized way of looking at the question. Before hiring the animals it is necessary to examine the back of each; stable keepers in Latin America are as tricky as their kind in other parts of the world, and will muster into service any old sore-backed beast if you don't keep an eye on them.

From Orotina to Esparta is about 16 miles, over a decent road that offers as fine scenery for the horseman as can be desired. The first place lies at an altitude of 1,200 feet (365 meters), the last at about 1,000 feet (305 meters), and on the way down a glimpse here and there at the Pacific Ocean is discovered. Roads in Costa Rica are decent, in the dry season, but like war according to General Sherman, during the rainy months. They have one superiority over those of other countries, however, in that they are marked, regularly and methodically, by practical kilometer sign posts, and it is a mighty consoling pastime, I can assure you, to note the distance and be able to trust the record, every five-eighths of a mile.*

For short distances, where the roads are passable, a cart is cheaper than mules. If there is plenty of time between towns, so that the cart can finally catch up with the mules, it is also pleasanter to go on ahead and to enjoy the travel with no worry about baggage. For the 24 kilometers, it is a safe reckoning that on a hired livery horse one can go about 8 kilometers an hour; a cart, drawn by oxen who can not by even inhuman prodding be made to move beyond their normal pace, 3 kilometers an hour is the utmost speed. I have made the distance in three hours, but my ox cart, which left Orotina at 3 o'clock in the afternoon did not arrive at Esparta until 3 in the morning. For ladies and invalids, carriages can be hired, or panier saddles. But I forget; I am acting as guide for the commercial traveler, not for the tourist.

Esparta is a new old town, revived by the temporary advantage of being the present terminus of the railway from Puntarenas. It has about 3,000 inhabitants with the usual number of hotels and general stores. The climate there is tropical, but the nights are cool. Some business might be done in the place, although only the commoner grades of goods could be sold. I never made a try at it, as I always managed to catch the early morning train down. Esparta is interesting, anyhow, because here the traveler meets for the first time, in adventuring on the Pacific coast, the genuine Latin American country hotel. He gets a bed, that's all. Here, too, he catches his first glimpse of the hammock which is so general in Central America. If other travelers arrive, no matter what the hour, day or night, they take the next beds in the same room, till three or four are occupied. It is all goodfellowship, however, and often leads to an acquaintance that may prove valuable in the future. The Latin loves wayside associations, he is always ready to talk and usually begins conversation, partly as a matter of politeness if he sees that the stranger is a foreigner and is seeking information, partly from curiosity, as he is eager to exchange views on general matters and may wish to learn what opinion of local conditions has been created in the mind of his neighbor.

The next lesson is to manage the trick of getting up early, washing in the dark, and taking a hurried cup of coffee by candlelight, so as to catch the train leaving about sunrise, as it does from Esparta to Puntarenas, a distance of only an hour and a quarter away. I myself like these trains that leave in the first dawn of the morning; the air is so cool and fresh, the passengers so bustling in their quiet way that the newness of it never wears off. It is necessary, however, for the traveler to give sharp attention to his baggage and to assure himself by personal inspection that everything is on board, or there is a chance that some article may be left behind.

The checking system is quite well developed and understood in Central America, and if substantial brass checks are not used, at least good paper receipts are issued by the station agent, which are perfectly valid claims for each and every piece intrusted to the railway. Nevertheless, the agent must not and can not be hurried; he must have time to weigh the baggage collectively so as to see that nothing above the

*See note on a previous page, stating that the railway is now open all the way. Of course, the mule and cart trip is no longer necessary, but the description may be applied to other places in Central America.

proper amount allotted to the ticket is carried free; and then he must enter in his book an account of the procedure, in accordance with the regulations. As a rule, it is better to have baggage attended to the afternoon before the morning on which an early train leaves. I have fallen into the habit of carrying all personal baggage with me. Porters are cheap and obliging; no one objects to satchels, baskets, boxes, or even bird cages in the car. On arriving at one's destination the sides of the train swarm with boys, big and little, eager to transport anything and everything in any direction; bags, etc., are passed through the window to the fortunate boy outside—be careful to strike a bargain with him and learn his name beforehand—and it then is an easy matter to go to the hotel by carriage or on foot, waiting till later in the day to get the heavier trunks. The agent can be no more hurried in delivering than he can in receiving the goods.

Puntarenas (spelled as one word to distinguish it from the Punta Arenas in Chile) lies at the extremity of a sandy point jutting into the Pacific Ocean. It is a healthy town of about 5,000 inhabitants, with a good general business throughout the contiguous interior as well as along the coast. All kinds of merchandise can be sold here if the American goes after it properly, but at present much of what is sold here comes from English and German manufacturers, while several shops are managed by Chinese. This is a fashionable seaside resort for many Costa Ricans, and the municipality maintains a pretty little bathing establishment at the end of one of the two piers. The charges are moderate and the service excellent. From this port a small steamer makes the coastwise places in the Gulf of Nicoya. One of the principal cities of the Republic is Liberia, situated at the north near the frontier of Nicaragua. It is in a cattle country, but on the edge of the gold fields.

I have often heard the question debated among the people of Puntarenas, whether the place will lose its importance or gain when the railway to San José is completed. Will merchants go up to the capital to buy their stock, or will salesmen save them that trouble, as much as they can, and deliver goods quicker and cheaper from the east? At present the route selected from the United States (California excepted) is from New Orleans across Panama and up the coast. My opinion is that very much will depend upon the activity of the salesmen, and if they study the market they need not lose it.*

To enter Nicaragua from Costa Rica the only practical route is by steamer from Puntarenas. The traveler needs advice here. In the first place the steamship company requires payment for the passage ticket in United States gold, and if this has not been secured in San Jose, the charge for exchange by local merchants, as there is no bank in Puntarenas, will be considerably above normal. In the second place, it is customary and sometimes obligatory for the passenger to obtain from the authorities of the Government a passport to leave the country; in some instances the steamship agent will not issue a ticket until the passport is shown. This costs nothing, but if the day of sailing happens to be a holiday so that it will not be issued then, or if the traveler is so unfortunate as to have forgotten this ceremony till the last moment, he can not go on board, and he must cool his heels for a week or so longer waiting for the next steamer. In the third place, he must arrange with *cargadores* (porters) to carry his baggage to the pier, and with boatmen to lighter it from the pier to the steamer lying out in the harbor. The steamship company's ticket includes only passage on the vessel, but the traveler must meet the expense of arriving and landing. I always bargain several hours in advance of the sailing time, for then it is easy to make favorable terms. I want to add this, too, that once made by a boatman the terms will be honestly kept. I never yet was cheated or held up after the price had been settled.

From Puntarenas one can land at San Juan del Sur, in Nicaragua, or go on to Corinto. The cable station is at San Juan del Sur, and Rivas, an aristocratic old place up the hillside near the shores of Lake Nicaragua, only 18 miles inland. If one goes this way, there is the advantage of somewhat cheaper cost of transportation, and the fact that, working along through the chief towns of the Republic the ground is gone over only once, the exit being at Corinto, where another steamer is taken for the north.

*The trade of Puntarenas seems not to be adversely affected by the opening of the new railway.

Nevertheless, it is an unpleasant landing place, is San Juan; the anchorage is insecure on account of the shore wind; there is no wharf, and the town itself is a good place to get away from as quickly as possible. Moreover, the climb up to Rivas is unpleasant and solitary. My advice is to stick to the steamer as far as Corinto.

The first-class ticket on the Pacific coast may be reckoned at $10 gold for each twenty-four hours or fraction thereof. On my last trip I left Puntarenas in the afternoon of one day, arrived at San Juan del Sur the next morning, where we remained until the afternoon, and entered the harbor of Corinto, Nicaragua, about sunrise of the following morning, landing shortly after breakfast. For the passage I paid $20.

In Corinto the problem of getting on shore presents itself. There is a good pier of solid construction, but only one steamer at a time can come alongside. Once, I remember, my steamer had to wait at anchor, with no assurance when it could go to the dock. I hired a small boat to take me and my baggage ashore, and thus gained several hours, but I was obliged to pay the regulation landing fee (about $1) just the same as if I had touched the wharf. These details must be borne in mind and a liberal supply of American small change provided for such emergencies, or else annoying delays may result. Fortunately American money is usually accepted, at a discount, of course, but its cash value is undisputed. Custom-houses and railways demand payment in the money of the country, but this can always be purchased with American money from local merchants if there is not opportunity to go beforehand to a bank. I always carry a supply of paper currency (American) to meet such emergencies.

Corinto is a town of about 3,000 inhabitants, rather pleasantly situated for tropical scenery, and the headquarters of the large importers. The hotel accommodations are altogether inadequate. The traveling man must take what he can get, but I advise the tourist to hurry away from here as soon as possible. The one train through to Managua leaves at 5 o'clock in the morning. There is another, in the early afternoon, but this goes only to Leon, about three hours away, where the night must be spent, but the hotels in Leon are decidedly more attractive. Railway fare in Nicaragua is cheap, as the entire journey from Corinto to Granada—120 miles—costs only 13.40 pesos (first class), equal to about $1.75 gold.

The chief cities to visit in Nicaragua are Leon, Granada, and the capital Managua, in all of which there are excellent business opportunities. In the north, two days horseback ride or more from Leon is a substantial American coffee colony, where good stores are supplying the surrounding population. Salesmen from the United States almost never visit these places, yet English and Germans make regular trips both to the towns and to the interior. They meet success, or they would not work the territory. If Americans made a sincere effort to supply the demand existing in the Republic, even to-day, there is no reason why they can not be as successful as the Europeans.

I have made no mention of the east coast of Central America, because, as a matter of fact, that is a separate region that must be worked by itself. This applies particularly at this time to Nicaragua. Part of the reason why this beautiful country—and it is one of the most beautiful and naturally productive lands in Latin America—has been hitherto so carelessly treated by the American commercial agent is its practical inaccessibility from the Mississippi Valley and the east of the United States. Nicaragua is still altogether dependent upon the Pacific Ocean for its foreign connections, as the only dependable routes are through San Francisco or Panama. Even Salvador, as I shall show later, is far ahead of Nicaragua in that respect. All the settlement of the country, with the exception of Bluefields, lies on the western slope of the mountains. There is no commercial path between the east and west coasts. Therefore, to visit Bluefields and the contiguous territory it is far better to start from New Orleans on an independent trip than to try to cross country from Managua.

The railroad question in Central America is, therefore, the most vital one in the development of that portion of the continent. For Nicaragua it is absolutely essential

that a line to the Atlantic seaboard be constructed as soon as possible. A satisfactory survey has been made, the distance being only 118 miles, with almost no grading. The cost would be small, compared with many roads in the Tropics, and the profits, admitting good financial management, ought to be splendid, for it would save hundreds of miles and many days of circuitous shipment and bring Managua as close to New York or New Orleans as San Jose de Costa Rica is now.

The old water route along the San Juan River need not be seriously considered. Once upon a time it was a highway, feeding the west coast while the canal project interested the world, but it is impracticable now. San Juan del Norte, or Greytown, is no longer an available harbor, nor are there steamer connections north and south along the coast. The necessarily irregular traffic on a tortuous, uncertain river can never meet the requirements of modern commerce. The only thoroughfare, therefore, can be the projected railway beginning on the Gulf near Bluefields, which should terminate at some point on the railway already in operation on the west coast. The first train to deliver freight into Managua over such a line will advance civilization a generation.

The Pan American Railway must also be considered, but this transrepublic line would not be part of it. Nicaragua has now only the little railway far within the country. On the north, 40 miles must be added before the frontier of Honduras is reached, and even then for all practical purposes nothing much is accomplished, although ultimately its effectiveness will be very great. Toward the south, however, that is, into Costa Rica, the Pan American extension will work wonders. From Granada only about 70 miles are needed to the frontier. From that point there seems to be confusion as to the direction it should take to cross Costa Rica on its way to Panama. To my mind there is no doubt whatever. Properly selected, it can be made a successful trade route, opening a new region already partially brought under cultivation. It might touch Liberia or go more to the eastward, but at all events meeting the rails of the established line at Alajuela. From Alajuela to San Jose, thence to Limon, thence—partly built now—to Bocas del Toro, thence across the divide to David and on to Panama. It is fascinating prophecy, and I, who know the way from experience, am enthusiastically eager for its completion, for the day that Managua is connected by rail with San Jose will see a million acres open to mankind and the trade he carries with him.

In ordinary times I would spend four to six weeks in Nicaragua. Let me say four. It was five weeks from New Orleans to the steamer in Puntarenas; nine out of the estimated twelve, and I am only on my way to Salvador. If you let me continue another rambling letter of this kind, I shall hope to do the three remaining Republics, and in my concluding letter I want to give some final hints about the commercial methods which must be followed in order to make the effort pay.

VIAJERO.

PUERTO CORTES, HONDURAS,
October 24, 1910.

To the Editor.

DEAR SIR: I have been obliged to come to this place unexpectedly, but it is not on the line of travel as I usually plan it. To cover the better part of Central America, the more direct route is through Honduras from south to north, as I shall explain later on. Probably this digression explains also why I have not received word from you about my last article, yet it is by no means uncommon for me to be even weeks away from my mail, especially if I expect answers to letters, although direct postal connection in Central America is improving remarkably. Be that as it may, I send this contribution on, in case you decide to use it immediately after the second article, if that is printed.

At the present moment a discussion of conditions in Nicaragua has but temporary value, and that is the reason why I have not stated at greater length the character of the money in that Republic. The paper *peso* is the only unit of value, and does not seem to have much of a foundation for its exchange. There is really only one bank in the whole country. This is in Managua and has correspondents in the larger towns. The substantial commercial houses which do an import and export business, buy and sell money, and deal in exchange. If they have any standing at all, they can be thoroughly trusted. The advice of the American consul or consular agent in this regard is the best guide.

Besides the paper *peso* there are the silver, nickel, and copper subdivisions and the multiples of the *peso*, all dependent upon fluctuations. The assumed value of the unit is $0.386 gold, which is the silver basis of the coin, but when I was last in Nicaragua the American dollar was good for 8 *pesos* at least and might at any hour bring more.* Prices of daily commodities remained, of course, the same, so that living is cheap so long as it depends upon local products, but comparatively dear when the cost refers to articles imported from abroad. For that reason business is dull and sales are slow. The additional factor that political conditions are unsettled must also be taken into consideration.

But when Nicaragua once more is a peaceful country; when a stable government is established and the people can return to work; when the naturally immensely productive capabilities of the land are utilized, then there will be a boom in the Republic. The natives are intelligent and energetic. They are not afraid of work, and instinctively they prefer industry to war. They have suffered from a generation of unrest. But in these days of ambition for material progress and growing disgust (*desprecio*) for war, they can not much longer be denied the right to work. Every prospect is brighter than it was a year ago, and the promise for the future is the best for years.

I am an optimist in my interpretations of Latin America. I believe in the people and in the country. I think that even the very fact that Nicaragua has so long been deprived of her physical rights is a point in favor of her growth when the time comes. To-day she is one of the most backward of all the American Republics. The cities of Granada, Managua, and Leon, by nature fitted to be centers of culture and wealth, are woefully undeveloped. They lack almost every essential of modern municipal life. Electric lights there are, but no street-car service (Granada's poor little local tramway has been abandoned). They must have drainage, water supply, paved streets, and scientific plumbing. The country is rich. Sugar, coffee, cattle, and timber by no means exhaust the resources. Bananas are profitable on the east coast, mines are known to exist toward the north, and the western portion has for centuries rewarded those who even scratched the soil. Trade conditions at the moment are bad, I confess, but the man, company, or nation showing faith in them now will not lose in the long run.

This should be a hint to business men and capitalists. With good government the finances will be adjusted. The people will produce, and as soon as they begin to sell they must buy. The market deserves study, and I shall continue to give attention to it.

Nine weeks had already gone before I left Nicaragua for Salvador. Probably an explanation will be demanded of my reason for placing the Republic of Salvador next after Nicaragua, instead of Honduras, which geographically lies immediately between the two. If the traveler wishes to work Honduras only at the port of Amapala, and if he is lucky enough to catch a steamer northbound which stops at Amapala, and can then, after a wait of several days, catch another steamer of the same obliging habit, he can visit that port intermediately. Or if he can not wait for the scheduled steamer—sometimes Amapala is skipped anyhow, schedule or no schedule—he can cross the Bay (Gulf) of Fonseca to La Union, in Salvador, where there are good opportunities, and take the steamer at that point.

*Exchange still fluctuates.

In my opinion, however, that route is unsatisfactory, because it enters Salvador at the back. Of course La Union should be visited, and it is a shame that the people in that neighborhood, including, too, the prosperous interior contiguous to La Union and San Miguel, so seldom see an American commercial representative. But the wisest and the shortest way to get the best out of Salvador is to strike direct for the capital through the port of Acajutla, visit the western part of the Republic, and then to cut across the country over the cart roads, through San Vicente and other distributing points like Chinameca and San Miguel, to emerge at La Union. From this port it is easy to cross to Amapala in Honduras, and, without dependence on a steamer, to do that place, cross the interior of the Republic through the capital, Tegucigalpa, Comayagua, San Pedro Sula, and Puerto Cortes, from which port on the north coast it is possible to find frequent transportation to Puerto Barrios, in Guatemala. All that Republic then lies open to the traveler without further inconvenience. How to do it is what I want to tell about.

The steamer leaving Corinto, Nicaragua, in the afternoon arrives at La Union, Salvador, early the following morning. It stays there all day. This gives time to go on shore and look over the ground. La Union lies in a beautiful bay, almost landlocked, but on that account a safe harbor, although vessels of more than shallow draft must anchor quite a distance off shore, as there is not depth enough close to the little pier. La Union itself is an active place, being the only port of entry for a large consuming population in the interior. Just now it has taken on new life because of the railway building toward San Miguel. This line may ultimately stretch across the Republic into Guatemala.

Next to La Union, in the steamer's itinerary, comes La Libertad. This is only an open roadstead, and of importance chiefly because it is an outlet for a rich agricultural district, and may some day be the terminus of a railway from the capital, to which the distance is short, but over a rather steep range of mountains. The real port nearest to San Salvador is El Triunfo, but its harbor facilities need improvement before they can be made available. *

After La Libertad is Acajutla. This is the great inlet and outlet of Salvador's commerce, for the railway runs between this place and San Salvador, tapping on the way the prosperous towns of Sonsonate, Santa Ana, and others of lesser size. Every one of these places is worth visiting. They buy everything from a grand piano to garden seeds, but personal solicitation is needed to get the merchants to turn a friendly eye toward the United States.

Landing at Acajutla is still by heavy rowboats or barges, for the port is really nothing but an open roadstead in which steamers must lie quite a distance from shore, partly on account of lack of water, but largely because of the heavy swell or roll of the Pacific, which makes loading and unloading from the pier into deep seagoing vessels a difficult matter. The method adopted is to lay the barge close to the pier; from this latter a swinging basket is let down by a crane into the boat; passengers step into the basket, cling to the hand-rail, the signal is given as the boat sinks after a swell passes under it, and the lift is cleverly executed before the next swell arrives. I have described the maneuver more clumsily than it is performed, I know, but I wish to call attention to it, because information on this point ought to be clear to the person traveling on the west coast of Central America. He can prepare his baggage with this in mind. Just let him remember what I said about trunks and their weight and he will have no trouble. I have seen huge boxes unloaded at Acajutla, usually without accident, for the winch boys there are as clever as you please, but sometimes it is impossible to handle these cumbersome packages quickly, and then they strain at the joints and bump the surrounding furniture unmercifully.

Steamers plan to reach Acajutla early in the morning, so that passengers may land in time to catch the 10.15 a. m. train. A fee is charged by the wharf for each person and piece of baggage, amounting to about $1 gold for each passenger and his ordinary baggage.

*Plans for the railway from La Libertad are advancing, and the port of Trinnfo is attracting more attention.

I used to think that Salvador money was hard to understand, and that it was unstable, but I don't find it so nowadays. The silver *peso* has an established value of $0.382 gold, but it hardly ever reaches that price. The method of quotation in the banks of the Republic is to assume this *peso* at the normal price of 100 *centavos;* the premium on the theoretical gold value is then added, as 180 or 190, or whatever it may be at the time. The statement is consequently made that the *peso* rates at 280, or 290, etc.* Being interpreted this quotation simply means that a gold dollar—for all quotations in exchange are based on the American gold dollar—is worth 2 *pesos* and 80 *centavos* (2.80 *pesos*). I reckon roughly about 3 *pesos* to the dollar, but of course in business figuring a much more exact calculation must be made. Fluctuations occur from day to day, but any bank will give a diagram of the exchange for the last five years or so, yet, taking it all in all, Salvador money does not vary unreasonably.

I am afraid that I am not getting on very fast in my "travel lessons," and I should like to keep on talking about little Salvador. It is such a delightful country, the people are so cordial and energetic, their products so abundant, and their consuming capacity so great in comparison to the size of the Republic, that very much more attention should be given to Salvador than is at present the case.

The capital, San Salvador, is only six hours by a splendidly equipped and managed (British) railway from Acajutla. My advice is to make San Salvador headquarters, and from there to return for a week or two, according to conditions, to Sonsonate, Santa Ana, and whatever other cities promise good opportunities.

This is as suitable a place as any to give the approximate population of the chief cities of the Republic. San Salvador has about 60,000 inhabitants; Santa Tecla or Nueva (New) San Salvador, 18,000, a pretty and healthy suburb of the capital, connected with it by a short railway that makes the run in forty-five minutes, and by an almost completed automobile avenue ‡ Santa Ana, 53,000; Sonsonate, 17,000; La Libertad, 3,000; Acajutla, 1,500—all of these cities can be reached from the capital, although only by horseback to La Libertad. Then in the eastern portion of the Republic are San Vicente, 20,000; Chinameca, 12,000; San Miguel, about 25,000, and La Union, 4,000, not to mention several others like Coatepeque, 12,000, which can be taken in only by riding through the interior, as I shall explain when I come to it.

But the size of these towns by no means gives an idea of their purchasing power. Salvador has almost one and three-fourths million of inhabitants, something over 200 to the square mile. Nearly every foot of ground is cultivated, and the people live in a modern way; they like good clothes, good food, and good tools, and will pay for them. Just how to get at them personally, is what I am trying to tell my friend who plans to do Central America in three months.

Of course, it is easy to stick to the railway, and thereby to visit the western towns mentioned, but I regret to say that Americans seldom make the effort. Not more than three hours from Acajutla I know of a small "grocery store" selling all sorts of supplies for the neighboring country folk, but the only article from the "States" was cotton cloth, brought down from San Francisco. Everything else was German or English. And the reason? Simple enough. No American salesman ever passed that way to show his wares, whereas Germans and Englishmen were on hand every three, six, or twelve months, as regular as the calendar. I know of one instance where a young native, in other business all of his working day, is now selling $5,000 worth of products from only one United States factory, outside of his regular office hours, merely because he keeps in his own private house an attractive display of the articles he has for sale, and when he solicits orders can immediately demonstrate them and quote prices laid down free from embarrassing detail. The same principle holds in places off the railroad. Personal demonstration will produce results. Therefore the American must go to the smaller towns as well as to the cities, if he wishes to test the capacity of the country.

*This should read 'exchange is quoted at.'
‡The avenue is now completed and in excellent condition..

I want to take this opportunity to say that in all the cities on the railroad hotel accommodations are excellent. I have paid at the rate of 5 to 8 *pesos* ($1.75 to $2.50) a day, which includes coffee with fruit—occasionally eggs—in the morning, and two good meals, *almuerzo* and *comida*, one at noon and the other in the evening. Usually there is a bathroom with at least a shower, free to guests.

For the ordinary man a week in the capital, San Salvador, is none too long. He may, by good luck, visit Sonsonate, Santa Ana, and the western towns, within a second week. This adds two weeks to the nine already spent. To reach the eastern towns lying between San Salvador and La Union is another matter. To return to La Union by steamer from Acajutla accomplishes nothing, for the three or four days on the way are wasted, and to enter the interior from La Union means to do exactly as much work as if one went overland. Perhaps I can make this clear if I describe my own trip, the last time I went over the ground.

I left San Salvador one Sunday afternoon shortly after 3 o'clock. My destination was the little Lake Ilopango, scarcely 8 miles from the capital, but such a beautiful place, hidden away beneath the mountains, the water so fresh and clear, and the modest hotel so clean and inviting, that it was worth the extra half day I gave to riding there, so as to get an early start on the Monday morning.

My outfit was 1 pack mule, more heavily loaded than I liked, 1 *mozo* as guide and caretaker, and my own mule. For everything I agreed to pay 80 *pesos* ($25) to carry me as far as San Miguel by any route I chose, so long as I arrived there by Friday evening. I was to pay for all meals and lodgings of myself, the boy, and the animals on the way, but what they consumed going back to San Salvador came out of the stable keeper's pocket.

There are several good-sized towns between San Salvador and San Miguel, but it is hard to visit them all in one trip. Coatepeque, for instance, is one of the most thriving places off the railway; Alegria is not to be ignored, but for good reasons I selected the road through San Vicente and Chinameca. One deciding reason was my wish to go over the new highway (*carretera*) almost finished now between the Lake Ilopango and San Vicente, which will make travel much more comfortable and quick through the interior, and bring the two cities nearer together. *

I wish I could describe that delightful ride. The few inconveniences of getting up before sunrise, of simple meals at village inns at midday, of steep hill climbing or dipping deep into intervening valleys, of crossing mountain streams rushing above the animal's knees, of holding my feet high against the saddle and yelling constantly at the boy that my precious baggage must be kept safe at all costs—these are forgotten in an instant; but the memory of clear, starlit mornings, of the pleasure of the hour's rest in the shade during the noon's heat, of the arrival tired and hungry at the end of the day after sunset at some decent *posada* or hotel, to find a cheery welcome, not alone as a paying guest, but as a fellow human who adds one more to the company, for that is the way the Latin esteems the traveler—these impressions, with the vivid pictures of green mountains and valleys, of cornfields, coffee *fincas*, palms, ferns, and cactus are never forgotten. I pity the man who can not weigh one against the other and feel that after all Central America is a mighty pleasant place to travel in, whether it be for pleasure or for profit.

In these cart roads of Salvador I have spent many pleasant days. The new highway between the lake and San Vicente is splendidly constructed. It is 25 miles long and climbs to a height of 2,100 feet. At the beginning it encircles a hill in several spirals, the view of the lake from the top being glorious, but every foot of the way is negotiable by an automobile, and I think that if it is kept in repair this one feature alone will be a strong factor in popularizing that vehicle in Salvador.

From San Vicente eastward the road is not so good, and although called a cart road (*carretera*) its usefulness is really limited to oxcarts of a primitive kind, or to a two-wheeled buggy. I should hate to pass over it in a carriage. This remark applies to the rest of the way also as far as San Miguel and thence to La Union. Some stretches may be smooth, well graded, and broad, but suddenly a hill rises in front, deep ruts are met, and the road narrows to space only for two wheels between rocky walls or on the edge of a precipice.

This unserviceableness of the road is particularly evident between San Miguel and La Union, a distance of 40 miles (64 kilometers). This too is the most used portion for carts carrying freight into the interior from the port and from the higher lands down to the port. All sorts of merchandise go to the thickly populated areas east of the Lempa River, and the mines (near San Miguel) send down their ores, accompanying a stream of carts with coffee and other native products for export.

I have passed 30 carts in an hour groaning their sluggish way along, the patient oxen hauling them slowly over huge rocks or through deep ravines, the dust inches deep in the crevices, or the mud in the rainy season even deeper. Yet the traffic increases and the road grows worse. There is now building a railway from La Union to San Miguel, with promises of extending farther into the country, to tap the rich region hitherto dependent upon such cart roads alone. This will be a godsend to half of Salvador, which had been confined to carts for all their means of traffic.*

La Union is the safest harbor in the Republic. Lying completely protected in the Bay of Fonseca, it is decidedly better than the open roadsteads of the Pacific. Lack of deep water is the only inconvenience, but loading is easier, because there is no swell. It really serves the eastern half of the Republic, and a very ambitious half, let me tell you, for the people east of the Lempa River believe in themselves, and will not be subordinate to the older and better known western portion. They have very little notion of Yankee goods, however. A traveler from the United States is almost unknown. Germans, Englishmen, and others from Europe are not afraid of the rocky road from the coast, and they meet success. In fact, I think that any man can find profitable markets all through this neighborhood if he goes after it actively. I have not mentioned all the towns, by any means, which deserve a visit. I could write a whole article on Salvador for Americans, but I must hurry away from the subject in order to keep my promises and to try to reach my destination within the appointed time.

I can not leave the dear little country, however, without paying a merited compliment to the courtesy of the inhabitants. They are cordial, unaffected, and hospitable. Spontaneous kindness is characteristic of them. I must mention also the admirable development of the telephone throughout the country. It is possible to telephone from one end of the Republic to the other. I have come into many a small hamlet hardly big enough to be called a village, and at the corner of the *plaza* is sure to be a telegraph station, but in not a few instances the same tiny office will have a telephone box at one side, from which, as easily as from New York City to Philadelphia, a message can be spoken 100 miles away.

It has taken me a week to travel from San Salvador to La Union, during which I visited four good-sized towns. I ought to have spent two weeks on the way, and to have taken in two or three more. To cover the district thoroughly not less than two weeks should be allowed, and that is hurrying. There is no American consul outside of the capital, and very few American residents. The salesman can therefore get no help from such officials, and must trust to the friends he may make and to the banks, which will give him practical advice.

My expenses, including the cost of the mules and guide, as explained before, amounted to $60. Now, if I had taken the steamer along the coast from Acajutla to La Union I should have paid from $15 to $20, besides the cost of embarking and landing, and I could have visited only the two ports, one of which I had already seen. From La Union I should have been obliged, in order to accomplish anything, to go inland up hill, and let me tell you that up to San Miguel is a good sight worse than down to La Union. Allowing two weeks for my trip, it cost me only five days extra, at a gain of three cities. I reckon, therefore, that my way is in the end most

*This highway is now completed and can be easily used by automobiles.

*This railway is now open for traffic, and provides many advantages over the time worn cart road.

economical, both as to time and money, if results are the thing that counts.

But the "rough riding" is by no means over yet in Central America. I have still to go through Honduras.

The average traveler contents himself with taking the steamer from a convenient port, stopping a few hours in Amapala, and hurrying away. That is a false and unprofitable plan of doing it. Merely passing along the coast would make me cover the same ground twice, and also skip the very portions of a country most open to opportunity for the introduction of American goods. I am trying to outline a trip to cover the ground, not merely to skim along beaten paths already worn out by the traveler.

In La Union it is possible to hire a gasoline launch, either from there, or by telegraphing across to Amapala, to take one into Honduras. The cost is the same, no matter where the launch comes from. I have paid 25 *pesos* (about $8) for the passage. By steamer it would cost less, provided the steamer happened to leave La Union when you wanted it and was going to stop at Amapala. The launch can be usually secured on twenty-four hours' notice. It is about 20 miles across the bay, shorter by launch than by steamer, because the former can cut through channels too shallow for the latter. I left La Union a few moments after 10 in the morning and arrived at Amapala just before 1 in the afternoon. The bay is almost always smooth, but toward midday a smart breeze comes up, which is trying for small craft. The early morning is therefore the best time for the trip.

Amapala is a pretty town of perhaps 4,000 inhabitants, lying under a mountain, on an island. It is also a relatively clean seaport, with little of the tropic surroundings so characteristic of Colon or Corinto. There is not an American in the place, all of the business being in the hands of well-organized European companies. Thev control the imports and exports, most of which come from Germany, but they are not at all averse to buying or shipping goods from the United States, if reasonable inducements are offered. However, the mistake made is in supposing that the interior is not worth visiting and that all the purchasing is done at Amapala. No wonder that the people of Honduras know nothing about us if our commercial endeavor is limited to the coasts. I have crossed from south to north through the Republic; that is, from the Pacific to the Atlantic; and this is the way to do it.

Amapala is on an island, about 20 miles from the main station—San Lorenzo—at the end of the highway to the capital, Tegucigalpa. San Lorenzo can be reached by the mail boat, which is rowed across at intervals, varying according to the tide. This passage is cheaper, although it may cause awkward delays. The surer plan is to hire a gasoline launch from one of the large commission firms, which will then make the trip according to one's convenience. A special permit used to be demanded by the *comandante* of the port for departure after sundown. These last two conditions add something to the ordinary cost. I have paid 25 *pesos* ($8) to cross after dark against the tide. I should add here that the money of Salvador is quite good in Amapala for such expenses, and that it can be exchanged for Honduras money at par. The commission men at the port will cash a draft or purchase American paper and gold, with only slight discount.

At San Lorenzo mules, horses, or even a carriage, can be obtained for the trip to Tegucigalpa. Or rather, they are met here, but they must be ordered in advance while in Amapala, either by telegraph or letter, according to necessity, from Pespire, 15 miles up the road, and the first town of any importance near the coast. Each animal costs 10 *pesos* ($3) from San Lorenzo to Tegucigalpa, to which fodder and bedding must be added. The livery stable *señora*—it is a lady in this case—is entirely responsible and trustworthy. A bargain struck with her will be kept.

In Honduras the *mozo* (servant) who acts as guide and looks after the animals receives the same reward as the price of a mule. He does not need a *bestia* of his own, but always runs along on foot, keeping up a dull or a smart pace for hours, and able to cover 20 to 40 miles a day without exhaustion. They are as a rule good faithful boys, they know every step of the way in daylight or darkness, they are acquainted with the people along the road who have accommodations for travelers, and they are helpful in many respects.

The distance from San Lorenzo to Tegucigalpa is about 60 miles (96 kilometers). When the road was built it was splendid and automobiles bowled along over it within twenty-four hours. When I last negotiated it, however, it was sadly in need of repair, and in places it was simply impassable for anything less substantial than a native oxcart. I understand that the Government is now reconstructing the road, so that the automobile service can be resumed. I advise the traveler, nevertheless, to prepare for the steady mule, as sure to get him there.

A good horseman, well equipped and seasoned, may do the distance in two days—that is, from early morning of the first day to the evening of the second day; it has been done between sunrise and sunset, but that is "going some." The usual arrangement is to leave San Lorenzo, where there is a funny little tavern, with simple cot beds and meals at all hours, before sunrise; that brings the traveler to Pespire about 10.30 a. m. Here breakfast is taken and a rest till early afternoon, as Pespire is awful hot. The meal is respectable, and that's all. From Pespire is a long, hard jaunt uphill, with some beautiful scenery as consolation, to La Venta, which I myself reached at a little after 10 at night. Good rest and refreshment in this rather pretty village are the rule. It grows cold at this elevation, for the road has by this time climbed to 2,500 feet, a blanket being necessary at night, and even at midday the sun is not uncomfortable. This day is the hardest. The second day finds the road better, while the heat and dust of the lower, coast portion, are left behind.

From La Venta onward it is uphill and down dale about all the way. I started just before sunrise, reaching Sabana Grande for an early breakfast. From this place, which is a lovely oasis among the mountains, there are kilometer stones, beginning at number 55, to mark the way to Tegucigalpa. This is at the edge of the mining region, but few habitations are passed, as the land is not very fertile hereabouts. In fact, the southern side of the capital, although much the more traveled, is by no means the richer agriculturally; north of the capital, especially beyond Comayagua Valley, astonishingly rich grazing and farm lands are in evidence, with more yet not numerous native villages.

Honduras is lonely, *triste* as the Spanish say, and no portion of the Republic illustrates the feeling stronger than this great, winding road to Tegucigalpa. I went along it by moonlight one night, dipping deep into a valley through pine forests, rising over the mountain to the dividing line beyond which lay another deep *barranca*. The moon, bright as it can be only in the Tropics, flooded the high ridges with silver, leaving in utter mist laden blackness the stretches through which I had to pass. Never the sign of a hut or hamlet; no sound, even, to disturb that stillness except the steady footfall of the mule that carried me. It was awe inspiring. I hardly dared speak to my *mozo*, plodding along a few paces in advance. When I lit my cigarette down in the valley again the flame startled me, and I thought of the devil's tryst in Der Freischütz, and began to wonder whatever had brought me here. Then I climbed 800 feet again, in scarcely 40 minutes, winding up and up to another ridge. Clear to the east was a faint break on the horizon, which even the moon could not hide. Before I knew it the sun had risen. Ahead of me stretched the last portion of the road, downhill now most of the way, with houses scattered here and there. My *mozo* pointed a familiar finger to the shimmering roofs of Tegucigalpa. He had never seen a railway train nor a trolley car, and was blissfully ignorant of the benefits of our industrial civilization, but that was to him *la capital*.

Then I woke from my medieval dreams and realized what reason I had had for coming. It was commerce; I was on the spot to learn what the markets were, what the people wanted, and whether the United States could offer anything the pur-

chasers of Central America would buy. I was not ashamed of my poetry, but I was again in the twentieth century, where poetry and business can be combined, and I was about to enter the only capital of Latin America which had never heard the whistle from a locomotive.

But my space is exhausted. It has taken me practically a week from La Union to Tegucigalpa; 4 weeks were given to Salvador; 9 weeks before that I left New Orleans—14 weeks in all, and I still must make the trip across country to Cortes and thence to and through Guatemala. All this, however, I shall try to tell about in my next and last letter, and end it with a few hints about business in general, and the manner of going after it.

VIAJERO.

NEW ORLEANS, *December 1, 1910.*

To the Editor.

DEAR SIR: I fancy that my traveling friend will say, when he reads my last letter describing the conditions under which he must go to Tegucigalpa, "Thank goodness, that's over." But I must not allow him to congratulate himself too soon. I can only reply, "Cheer up, the worst is yet to come!" Which is the simple truth, because the trip from Tegucigalpa to Cortes on the north coast of Honduras is the roughest route of routine travel in Central America. Anything more primitive becomes, practically pe akisng, breaking one's way into the wilderness.

But what is he going to do about it? To be thorough, he should not omit the capital of the Republic, and once in Tegucigalpa, it would be foolish to go back to Amapala over the same road. I have known people to do this, however, and then to take steamer to San Jose de Guatemala, cross that Republic to Barrios, and catch a steamer from there to Cortes, a trip of at least 14 days' hard traveling, two of which must be in the saddle. Compared to the straight north road of six days in the saddle, it is a waste of time. Overland is no trip for a woman; although, on the other hand, I have known them to make it in 14 days or even less. But perhaps I can make the journey clearer when I come to it. Let me get back to where the start is made.

Tegucigalpa is a city of about 40,000 inhabitants, counting the adjoining neighborhood, which includes several mining camps and a few suburban settlements. It is the center of Honduras social and political life, and in reality exercises considerable influence over business and commercial activity in all the countrv. The best stores are here, and almost all retail supplies for interior towns are purchased in them, although they are closely connected with the importing houses at Amapala. It is a great mistake nevertheless to assume that on that account nothing is to be gained by visiting Tegucigalpa. The stores and merchants in that city set or follow the fashions, and often buy for their trade articles not furnished by the importing agents, because these agents handle staples chiefly and do not always know what is wanted according to the styles or seasons, while the retailers most certainly do know. That's their business.

My advice is, therefore, that Tegucigalpa ought to be visited by the salesman. Germans go there regularly, but Americans are rarely seen, more's the pity. There is a small American colony in the city and many American employees in the near-by mining camp. If they had the opportunity to purchase home-made goods, instead of foreign stuff, they would do so. As it is now, about the only choice offered in the entire region is between English, German, or French articles, which are in themselves worth the price, but do not meet the demand which the United States can so easily supply.

It is another matter, however, to decide whether to try for such isolated towns as Danli to the southeast, Jutigalpa to the northeast, Yoro to the north, or a few smaller places to the west. I should say "No." For the present these side trips would be too costly, and in all probability the large dealers in the capital, some of whom I know have branches in the interior, would satisfactorily extend the market in that direction. The principal point gained is to establish a center of influence in the Republic, and this is best accomplished right in Tegucigalpa.

So, therefore, let's be on the move toward Cortes. If the alert traveling man studies the country in this way, he will discover many things needed by the natives, no matter how poor and meager their lives appear. There is really no manufacturing activity in all the Republic. The people produce nothing beyond what they can piece together in their homes, yet they can buy and pay for imported supplies, as is proved by the sight and sound of sewing machines in hamlets of the most lowly kind. I haven't found that trade knocks at a man's door very hard; it can always be developed, but some one must hustle for it.

After all, the best argument for the trip to the north coast instead of the return southward through Amapala is that between Tegucigalpa and Cortes the richest portion of the Republic is crossed, and in this section whatever railroad is built in the future is bound to be located. In addition to which, the trip brings one out past the town of San Pedro Sula, the interesting American settlement not far from Cortes, and offers a chance to see what has been accomplished here.

I have made the journey from Tegucigalpa to Pimienta in six days. It can be made, by a little extra effort, in five days. Good travelers frequently make it in four days, and I heard of one instance, which I thoroughly believe, when a native boy, urged by the offer of a fat reward, reached the capital on the evening of the second day, having left Pimienta about sunrise. This was on foot, however, for the *mozos* in Honduras, as I said before, run along the mountain trails and make better time this way than if they went on horse or mule back. But six days is the saner reckoning, omitting, of course, any serious attempt to do business along the way. If sales are to be discussed, it will take two or more days and probably a week longer.

It is about 180 miles (290 kilometers) or as they reckon in Central America, calling 2½ miles a league, about 72 leagues from Tegucigalpa to Pimienta. Please don't laugh at the repetition of the word "about." The traveler in Central America, and for all I can hear in all Latin America, learns to take philosophically the native statement of *poco más ó menos* (a little more or less), or to smile when, after having been jogging along for an hour to a place said to be 4 leagues away, to hear from the chance passenger on the road that that very place is now 5 leagues farther on. Anyhow, I base my estimation on personal experience, on careful computation by other Yankees who have made the trip, and on the assertion of the *mozos* who have an acute feeling of distance. I am perfectly satisfied to stick to this distance until a surveyor measures it by scientific instruments.

The traveler, besides the outfit I mentioned in my first letter, must provide himself with his own hammock, a blanket, and a revolver. The saddle and pack mules he can hire from a responsible stable keeper in Tegucigalpa, who will necessarily furnish the *mozos* to accompany the animals. A man traveling light may buy his horse or mule, but that would be foolishness, and he would lose time and money in the long run. I'll explain the reason for all three of these pioneer articles.

The hammock is essential for the comfort and decency demanded by the respectable traveler. There are five nights on the road. In only two of the stopping places are beds obtainable, and even then this is not always the case. Other travelers may arrivo before you do, and they may be quartered in these beds, or you may not like the beds. One's own hammock, on the contrary, is always one's own, and relatively clean. The native cottages are simple affairs, and the inhabitants probably possess one or more beds, but it is a great deal to ask that he or she vacate the bed, for it must be remembered that there are no hotels on the way and that every night's lodging is a matter of courtesy and not a commercial transaction, although of course it is paid for.

The same rule applies to the blanket. Every night of the five is cold. In Proteccion, very cold, for the altitude is way above 4,000 feet, and to wrap one's self in a warm blanket is necessary for comfort. This is the only safe rule.

As to a revolver, there may be some argument. I have traveled in most parts of Central America and Mexico with no weapon whatever, and yet, in some of the wilder sections, like this in Honduras, brigands are occasionally met, or rather are certainly prowling around. They rarely molest a foreigner. Nevertheless, it is the custom of the country, and the natives undoubtedly have more respect for the traveler who is armed. It always seems ridiculous, but I yield to custom and carry a revolver. The next fellow may do as he pleases.

Now a word as to the money of Honduras. From Amapala to Tegucigalpa almost any money will pass, as Central American paper or especially United States gold, can be exchanged at the port for native currency. From Tegucigalpa to Cortes the natives understand only local money. A *peso* silver, in Honduras, is nominally worth $0.382 gold. Actually it fluctuates at 280 or above; that is to say, $1 United States gold will buy 2 *pesos* and 80 *centavos* paper, more or less, according to exchange. On the way north, as far at least as Comayagua, paper *pesos* with silver fractions are preferred and must be used, but it is wise to have the bank notes stamped as available in San Pedro Sula and Cortes. Any business house will explain this detail. The closer one comes to Cortes the more currency in Guatemala silver is used. This is a funny state of affairs, because this same silver, although preferred in Honduras, has practically no value whatever in Guatemala, and once across the border is worth only what the traveler can sell it for, which is precious little. It is best, therefore, to get rid of it while in Honduras, and to trust to United States gold until reaching Guatemala City.

But to begin the journey. I give my itinerary day by day, and shall go into detail only where necessary.

First day: Tegucigalpa to Proteccion, 36 miles, leaving at 6 a. m., over a winding mule trail toward the north; elevation 8.30 a. m. 4,500 feet, descending gradually to Tamara, a hamlet where luncheon is taken. Now the road crosses and recrosses the Rio Hambre, up the valley to 4,500 feet again at 4.30 p. m., and again up and down till 5.30 p. m. at Proteccion at the same elevation; a village where a hospitable old woman grants food and lodging, i. e., permission to sling a hammock and to crawl under one's blanket at 8.30 p. m., tired out.

Second day: Proteccion to Comayagua, 36 miles, starting at 6 a. m. just at sunrise. The day before, traveling was rough, in valleys and with little signs of habitation after the outskirts of the capital had been left behind. To-day it seemed at first worse than yesterday. Rocks are everywhere, the path only between the stones for an hour, and then begins a steep descent of 1,000 feet, better undertaken on foot for comfort and to relieve the mules, into the valley of Comayagua, a wonderful expression of nature, 40 miles long I should reckon, and 25 miles broad. It is fertile at all periods, but dry in the dry season, yet irrigation, which should be easy enough, would work wonders for corn, cattle, sugar and similar crops. Flores is a desolate hamlet at the edge of the valley, away from the rocks that form the cliff-like sides down which we came. Flores is half way, the remainder of the journey being on level ground, hot and lonely till the ruins of the original Comayagua are in sight, once the capital of Honduras. Comayagua we reached at 4.30 p. m. It is a pretty place, abundant water, several good sized shops, and the center of all the business in the neighborhood. It might be a city of 100,000 inhabitants instead of the meager 7,000 or 8,000 claimed, and will some day be worthy of its ancient glory. Elevation 2,500 feet.

Third day: Comayagua to Cuevas, 30 miles, leaving at 6.30 a. m. to arrive at 5.15 p. m. You must take my word for it that the north half of the Republic is a thousand times more fertile than the south half, and immeasurably better watered. The *mozos* (servant boys) assert that the running water is all pure and sweet, and I have drunk from many of the springs and rivers without bad results. On this day's journey every

*Exchange.

variety of scenery, from Tropic banana groves with palms and ferns, to heavy pine forests at an elevation of 3,000 feet, is passed. One drop I have measured is 1,200 feet, where the river Umuya is crossed, but Cuevas is 2,100 feet up on the top of a hill, like a fortress commanding the valley below.

Fourth day: Cuevas to Miambar, only 18 miles, but called by the boys the worst day of all, because of the steep hill climbing. We left at 7.40 a. m. and arrived at Miambar 2 p. m., elevation 1,600 feet. Pine on the mountain side, Tropics in the valley, up hill or down dale all the way, a few more villages in sight and more signs of farming, but no real industry, only corn fields, cattle, and pigs.

Fifth day: Miambar to Santa Cruz de Yojoa, 30 miles. Left at 4 a. m. to arrive at 4.30 p. m. The most beautiful day of all. Tropics, pine, rocks, and meadows, at elevations from 1,500 feet to 2,500 feet, but Santa Cruz is 1,800 feet in a fine valley, perfectly suited for breeding and rearing fat cattle. There is another road toward the west, preferred by some, but so far as I can see there is no choice, one being no better or worse than the other, although the Santa Cruz road is the more popular. For the last two hours of the journey, at an elevation of about 2,000 feet, there are vistas like the rich fields of Arkansas, red soil and deep grass, and at times I have been reminded unmistakably of the meadows of Kent, in England, except for lack of villages and of the peaceful signs of country habitation. One of the natives told me that years ago the whole neighborhood was much better cultivated, but that nowadays many ranches have been abandoned, the only hope of renewed activity being in the long deferred but ever expected railway extension from Pimienta to the interior.

Sixth day: Santa Cruz to Pimienta, 30 miles. Left at 6 a. m. and crossed to Pimienta on the Ulua River, the biggest in Honduras, at a few minutes after 4 p. m. The road, after staying on the plateau for over an hour, drops steeply to 800 feet into the really truly Tropics. Sugar, a few bananas, and cattle; plenty of water, and the rest of it jungle, so thick that a *machete* is needed 5 feet off the road. This is newly built, and shows it, but Pimienta is so near that the last few miles of hardship pass quickly enough. We are close to American civilization now, and begin to dream of beds, shops, and business, since nothing for the four days after leaving Comayagua can remind me of whatever brought me here.

The cost for each mule and boy has been about 50 *pesos* ($18 gold), and say $2 gold a day for all extras.

Pimienta is the present terminus of the Honduras Railway (National), 57 miles (90 kilometers) from Cortes. Steamers can ply on the Ulua River as far as this point, and when the spring freshets are not tearing things to pieces, they keep active in carrying fruit or hardwoods from here to the coast. I have crossed the river in a dugout, but those who live on its banks say that in the rainy season it is all one's life is worth trying to do so until the water goes down. No business here, either, so it is best to hurry on to San Pedro Sula, 19 miles (30 kilometers) toward the north, and 37 miles (60 kilometers) from the terminus, Puerto Cortes, on the Gulf of Mexico.

San Pedro Sula is worth while, and the many good American residents living in the place welcome the traveler. Their panic of 1906 is a thing of the past, and, although the boom of earlier days has quieted, the town and its surroundings are yet sure of normal and healthy progress.

Cortes is a vantage ground for this part of the Caribbean coast. Eastward are the ports of Tela, Ceiba, Iriona. and Trujillo, which can be visited by means of local schooners or launches, while toward the west are the two ports of Guatemala—Livingston and Barrios—only a few hours away by frequent steamers from New Orleans to or from Cortes.

I shall not take up much of your time in discussing the Republic of Guatemala. It is getting to be well known, appreciated, and traveled. Almost all available territory is approachable by the railways, and the interior towns are quite easy of access by stage, wagon, or the faithful mule.

From Livingston, for example, which is now regularly scheduled by steamers from New York and New Orleans, traffic is carried on by lighter steamers passing up Lake Isabal and by a short railway extending toward the northwest. This is the nearest way to reach Coban, one of the largest and most prosperous cities in central Guatemala. The ordinary traveler seldom goes there, however. To the south a railway connecting with steamers at Barrios and offering a daily service—again sunrise trains—takes you to the capital, Guatemala City, in about 10 hours, from which another line goes to the port of San Jose de Guatemala, or westward at the base of the mountains, almost to the Mexican frontier.*

To Guatemala City must be given at least one week, but two weeks are none too much. Then there are Antigua, 5 hours away by stage coach; Mazaltenango to the west, Retalhuleu and Caballo Blanco toward Champerico on the coast, both towns becoming important on account of the approach of the Pan American Railway over the Suchiate River between Mexico and Guatemala; they will be busy places and worth careful attention when travel from one capital—Mexico and Guatemala—to the other is made possible by rail connection. Quezaltenango, up in the mountains above these places, will take three or four days more. I can put a conservative limit, therefore, on all of Guatemala of three weeks, but even then the field is by no means covered.

Of the money of Guatemala I am rather afraid to speak, because it is so apt to be changed before this is read. When I last was there only paper *pesos* were in circulation, silver money of the country's coinage being, as I said in Honduras, unrecognized by the people, although used in that next-door neighbor. The paper *peso* should be equal to a silver *peso* of the four other silver Republics—38 cents and a fraction gold—but it isn't. Its depreciation was such that it was worth about 6 cents gold, all payments being made on that basis. Local prices are in this paper currency, so that living is cheap, but importations are priced in gold values, so that such values appear excessive. The merchant must judge accordingly. This awkward condition is bound to be remedied within a short time, however, just as sure as the sun shines, and then I warn the American manufacturer that if he hasn't kept his eyes on Guatemala, he will have overlooked a splendid market for his future trade.

Now let me sum up, Mr. Editor, because I feel that I am stretching these letters to an unwieldy length, and I do not wish to spoil the pages of your splendid BULLETIN by unreadable matter.

Guatemala can of course be visited by itself, and I advise the novice, who knows nothing of Latin America, to try first either this country or Costa Rica alone. The time allowance should be six weeks from New York or New Orleans and return, for either country, or say, 10 weeks for both of them together, as it is not hard to cover both of them in one trip, taking steamer along the Pacific side or recrosing one Republic to find a steamer on the Atlantic side plying between Limon and Barrios.

But I started out to break the illusion of my friend who was going to "do Central America in three months." It simply can not be done decently. In my last itinerary I had used up 14 weeks in reaching Tegucigalpa. Two weeks is a modest limit between the capital of Honduras and Guatemala City, if any effort is made to sell goods, and that's what he would be there for, I fancy. Three weeks more for Guatemala, and one week on the home trip. Six and 14 make 20, which is nearer 5 months than 3, and close reckoning at that. Even such traveling does not cover all of Central America, for the east coast of Nicaragua—Bluefields—and Belize in British Honduras, are active buying towns, if worked right; but these places can not well be included in such a Central American schedule as this, so I omit them from consideration.

Twenty weeks takes in all of Central America in one trip. Nothing less will reach the territory satisfactorily. Salvador can be visited alone, if desired, by the newly organized service through the City of Mexico (or Veracruz), 8 days from New York, but even that means 6 weeks to one Republic alone, while I have covered them all in my scheme of 20.*

I have said little about the cost, because that differs according to the individual, the goods he carries, and the character of merchants with whom he expects to deal. Twenty weeks contain 140 days; estimate $10 gold a day, or $1,500 in all, and I am sure that a hugely generous allowance is made, which should embrace everything and leave the traveler free from worry about emergencies that might arise. I speak only of travel in the dry season—December to April—for in other months the expense of time and money will surely exceed this limit.

Will it pay? This is of course the first question to be asked in considering any such venture. From my own experience I shall answer, yes. Perhaps not the first time, however. Yet I think the right man, making friends and demonstrating the excellent quality of his wares, can meet these expenses. But the great gain will be to establish a market, which is decidedly more easily developed on the second trip, and subsequently. Keep at it—just as a man would in the States. This is the best and in fact the only rule. The man who hopes to sell just once, with only a slight prospect of tempting the market another time, should leave it alone.

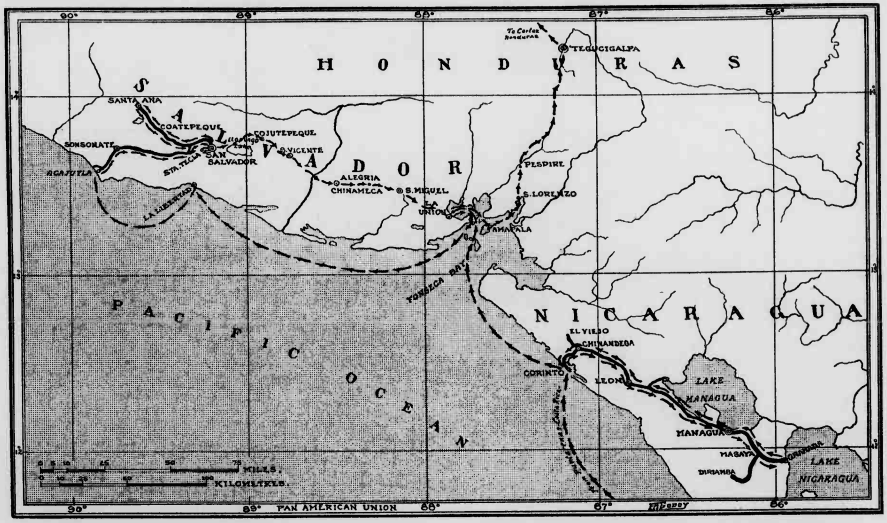
Now, what to sell? Almost anything. I am not sure but that even pianos might turn out profitable, but I wouldn't advise a person to try that line only. The people in Central America are musical and would surely take to phonographs. But the simpler necessities and articles approaching to luxuries are most in demand. I will not presume to specify what particular goods to offer. Machinery, house fittings, clothing, tools, canned goods—in a word, *staples*, which implies the immense mass of articles wanted by Central Americans, and at present supplied to a liberal extent by European exporters. But caution must be observed that good goods are shown and delivered. Even a native can be fooled only once. I know of an instance in Central America where barbed wire was furnished on a close contract, and the money paid in due time, but the wire lasted scarcely two years, and is to-day a standing advertisement in favor of German wire, which ten years after it was put up as a fence is serving its purpose.

But, Mr. Editor, I must close. I had not intended to go into the question of markets and methods. I see you have headed my letters "Traveling notes," and it is best to limit them to that subject. I surely am grateful to you for the space you have given me, and I sincerely hope that some reader may take me seriously and be encouraged to trust the highways and byways of Central America in his ambition to expand our American trade as well as our American ideals. The people there like Yankee goods. They will buy them, but as a rule only when they are shown at first hand by a man who knows his business.

Thank you again for your patience. I want to see these countries better known and understood. I think American manufacturers ought to make earnest efforts to meet their wants. It can't be done, however, by catalogues and quotations. If the money spent in postage and for translations were put into a personal venture of the kind I have tried to analyze, I know that the era of peace and prosperity in Central America would be hastened to the benefit of all concerned.

*The bridge across the Suchiate River is now completed and construction is progressing toward the main line of the Guatemala railway. Work has been begun also on the line to Quezaltenango from San Felipe.

*The steamer service from Salina Cruz at the Pacific terminus of the Tehuantepec Railway is now extended for both passengers and freight to ports in Guatemala, Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua.



TRAVEL MAP THROUGH NICARAGUA, SALVADOR, AND THE INTERIOR OF HONDURAS. THE SOLID LINES SHOW THE RAILWAY, AND IT WILL BE NOTICED, THEREFORE, HOW MUCH TRAVEL OFF THE RAILWAY IS NECESSARY TO REACH SOME OF THE MANY IMPORTANT COMMERCIAL PLACES IN THESE THREE REPUBLICS.

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